

# PROGRAM HISTORY

Caltech's commitment to waste reduction and recycling spans over 40 years. In the early 1960s, a small recycling program was run by a number of volunteer graduate students. In 1979, one of the student volunteers, Professor Judith Cohen, returned to campus as a faculty member and petitioned the administration to establish a recycling center. In 1989, a group of students created the Caltech Environmental Task Force (CETF) to run the recycling program. School and workload demands created challenges for CETF participants so for continuity purposes, campus recycling program operations became the responsibility of the Buildings and Grounds Department within Facilities Management.

A recycling facility was built in 1993 that is open to the public. Recyclables are sorted on site in approximately 20 separate bins. The recycling program has continued to divert waste resources from the landfill and serves as a model for other organizations. In fact, the program has received several awards for its recycling efforts.

- California Integrated Waste Management Board Waste Reduction Award – 1993-1994 & 2001-2004
- City of Pasadena Recycler of the Year Award – 2005 & 2007
- City of Pasadena Best of Pasadena Recycling Drop-off Centers Award – 2013

## GOALS & STRATEGIES

### Goals for Viability

Reduce waste through responsible procurement practices and encourage materials reuse and recycling.

### Strategies

- Vendor engagement & supply chain impact assessment
- Transparency in final material disposition
- Facilities stockroom management
- Academic department procurement
- Student led dining assessment



# MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE

The campus community has been successful in its efforts to reduce the tons of municipal solid waste (MSW) generated on the core campus, shown in the figure below. The Facilities Department has plans to expand its recycling and waste reduction programs on campus through a combination of increased access to recycling for the campus population and a composting program that is being piloted at the main dining facility, Chandler. Additionally, strategic partnerships with waste haulers and recycling companies will aid in achieving higher diversion rates.



## *Strategic partnerships*

The Institute's waste hauler transports all materials to a material recovery facility (MRF) to sort recyclables and commodities from trash. Trash is sent to an [incineration facility](#) in Long Beach where the material undergoes waste to heat energy transformation. Residual ash and unburned trash is transported to a landfill that employs methane gas recovery for energy generation. These progressive waste management technologies effectively provide Caltech with close to 100 percent landfill diversion throughout the year.

## *Composting*

At the start of the 2013 school year, Caltech Dining Services and the Facilities Department jointly invested in industrial grade waste reduction equipment – the Somat SPC75S Pulper and DH100 Dehydrator systems. The pulper affords the Institute nearly an 8 to 1 reduction in waste volume from the Institute's main dining facility and the dehydrator removes residual water from organics for easy storage before the product is composted. This program is new to the suite of sustainability initiatives across campus – we hope to make this a campus wide program within the next 1 to 2 years.

